Emily DeShazer | Collegian

ABOVE: A crowd of Longhorn defenders attempts to pry the ball away from sophomore guard **Angel Rodriguez** on Jan. 30 at Bramlage Coliseum.

LEFT: Junior guard **Will Spradling** goes up for a layup against Texas. K-State won the game 83-57 against the conference rivals and were able to rest the starting five for much of the second half.

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VS.

TIPOFF

5 p.m. Bramlage Coliseum

Cyclones off to fast start, aim to replicate success

Mark Kern
sports editor

After losing Royce White and Scott Christopherson from last season's team, there were doubts as to whether Fred Hoiberg and the Cyclones would make it back to the NCAA tournament or would flame out as a one-hit wonder. So far, the Cyclones (16-6, 6-3 Big 12 Conference) have proven to be a tournament contender again.

Iowa State currently sits at third place in the Big 12, and two of their three losses (KU, Oklahoma State) came in the final seconds of road games. Make no mistake, Iowa State, or "transfer U" as it is quickly becoming known, is going to be a contender all season long.

Filling in as the star on the team after White's departure is senior Will Clyburn, a Utah transfer who has emerged as one of the Big 12's best players.

Clyburn is averaging 15.2 points and 7.5 rebounds on the season and proving to be one of the most versatile players in all of the Big 12. At 6-foot-7-inches, he has the quickness to blow by the power forward and the size to overpower the small forward on the block.

In the 73-67 victory over the K-State Wildcats on Jan. 26, Clyburn had a monstrous game, recording a double-double with 24 points and 10 rebounds.

While Clyburn will be a focal point for the Wildcats to slow down, there are other Iowa players capable of having big games in Bramlage.

Including Clyburn, four Cyclones players hit multiple 3-pointers in Ames last month, including three by senior guard Tyrus McGee. Iowa State shot 11-of-22 from deep in that game, but looking at the stats something else jumps out. Despite being one of the smallest teams in the Big 12, the Cyclones out-rebounded the Wildcats by eight, not allowing the Wildcats to use their huge size advantage.

With such a small team, Iowa State is forced to shoot 3-pointers and keep the speed of the game up. If the Wildcats want to end a three-game losing streak in the series they must attack down low and dominate the battle on the boards.

At the beginning of the season, this game was thought to be one that would influence whether or not one of these teams would make the NCAA tournament. However, both teams have shown that they are ready to contend, and the winner of this game will still be in contention for a possible Big 12 title.

Blake Lanser | Iowa State Daily

Iowa State's redshirt senior guard **Will Clyburn** dunks the ball over K-State's junior guard **Will Spradling** on Jan. 26 in Ames, where the Wildcats fell to the Cyclones, 73-67. Although K-State has lost three consecutive games against Iowa State over the past two seasons, the Cyclones sit at third place in the Big 12, while K-State is tied with KU for first.

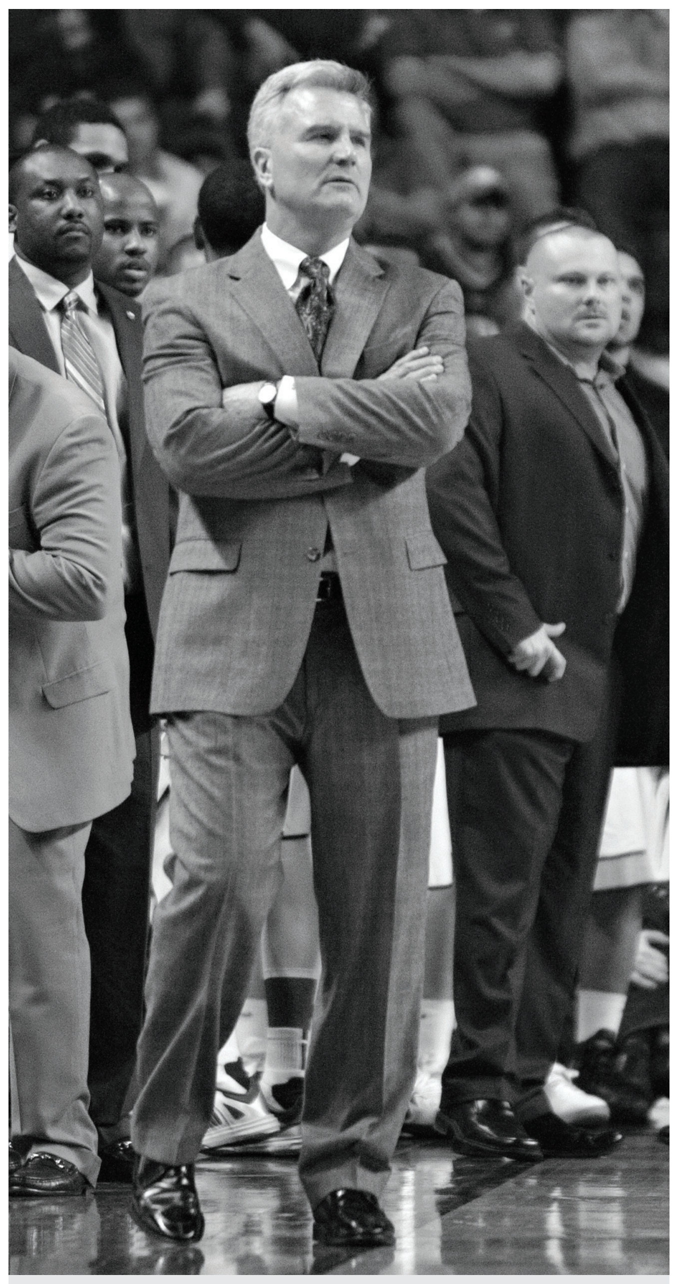
http://www.kstatesports.com/sports/m-baskbl/sched/ksu-m-baskbl-sched.htm

<------Game was on January 26, 2013 in Hilton Coliseum; KSU lost

K-State basketball under coach Bruce Weber has unique tempo, strategy

Nicolas Wahl

Editor's note: This is the first entry in a two-part series focusing on a statistical approach to K-State basketball and the functional differences between head coach Bruce Weber and former head coach Frank Martin.



Emily DeShazer | Collegian

Head coach **Bruce Weber** looks on as the Wildcats battle the Texas Longhorns on Jan. 30. The team is 19-4 under Weber.

The hiring of new K-State head coach Bruce Weber brought with it a new face for the K-State men's basketball program and a new brand of basketball. The differences in strategy between the two coaches can make for an interesting comparison.

Gone are Frank's spirited tirades on the sidelines, gone is "beware of the stare" and, more importantly to this column, gone is Martin's rugged, in your face, junkyard brand of basketball. In its place is the motion offense of Bruce Weber and a defense that, while still effective, is less predicated on ball-hawking and creating chaos for opposing offenses.

In my opinion, the difference between Martin's team and K-State under Weber comes down to how they perform in three related elements. Pace and something called the "four factors" show how a team operates. The third element, points-per-possession differential, is the most telling measure of a team's quality, and is the product of pace and the four factors.

Pace, or the number of possessions a team has in an average game, gives a ready example of how differently the team operates under the two coaches.

Martin's teams were routinely ranked near the top of the conference in possessions per game. They averaged over 70 possessions a game three times, and never dropped below a 67-possession average in a given year. Martin's lowest-paced season, which was last season's 67.7 possessions per game, still ranked K-State as the fastest-paced team in a slowed down 2011-12 Big 12 Conference.

Weber's team plays at a noticeably slower pace. The current K-State team is averaging just 64.3 possessions a game, which is ranked ninth out of 10 Big 12 teams this season. For reference, Weber's last five Illinois teams averaged roughly 65 possessions per game, which is just about where the Wildcats are now.

Where we can go from there is to take a look at how the two coaches operate, how it influences pace and which statistics become important for the success of teams under each coach. The four factors are a great place to start.

Basketball statistician Dean Oliver identified four possession-based statistics that added up to 100 percent of a team's success or failure. Shooting makes up 40 percent, the turnover battle is 25 percent, rebounding 20 percent and the free-throw battle is 15 percent. If a team can win enough of these battles, they will find success.

Under Martin, Wildcat basketball rose to and sustained a level of success that it hadn't seen in over a decade. His philosophy was simple. On offense create and attack the paint, drawing fouls as often as possible and crash the offensive glass with abandon. In Martin's scheme, a shot often didn't need to be open to be, as long as there were enough guys around to go after the rebound in case of a miss or a player could draw a foul in the process.

Bruce Weber plays an entirely different ballgame.

"Closer isn't always better," Weber said of K-State's shot selection earlier this season. "Open is better."

While every coach enjoys his players taking open shots, Weber's offense has been predicated on the ability of his players to make open jumpers. His fluid motion system is meant to create these opportunities. Players are constantly on the go, making instant reads on how to react. What it does not do is present a plethora of opportunities to get to the foul line.

The difference is reflected in the statistics. Weber's Wildcats' effective field goal percentage, which includes the additional point from each 3-pointer into the equation, is 51.4 percent in conference games. That puts K-State in a tie for first in the Big 12 with KU after the Jayhawks' loss to TCU on Wednesday. In contrast, Martin's teams usually fell in the 48- and 49-percent range, and usually in the middle of the Big 12 rankings.

That isn't to say that either coach's philosophy is better or worse. Next week we'll take a look at how the rest of the four factors affect the winning equation and how K-State fans can get an accurate reading on the success or failure of the basketball team.

Nicolas Wahl is a junior in journalism and mass communications. Please send comments to *sports@kstatecollegian.com*.

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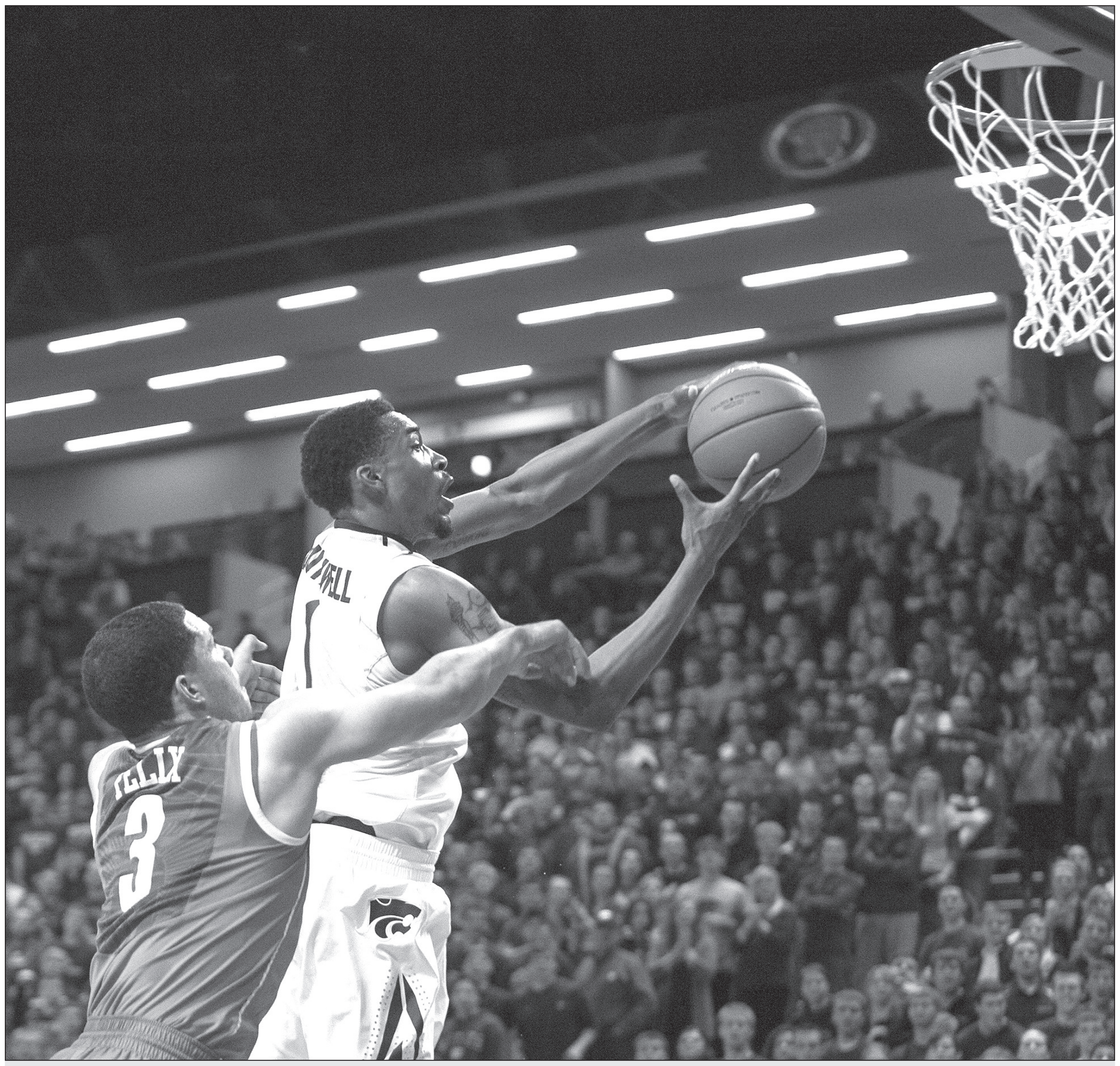

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Junior guard **Shane Southwell** gets fouled while going up for a layup against Texas guard **Javan Felix** on Jan. 30 at Bramlage Coliseum. Though several other players on the basketball team have put up solid numbers overall, Southwell has averaged 7.9 points, 3.9 rebounds and 2.5 assists per game, and has proven to be a key role player in high-pressure games for the Wildcats this season.

By the numbers

John Zetmeir
staff writer

3 *The number of consecutive games in which Iowa State has beat the Wildcats.*

K-State's loss to Iowa State this season is their only loss that didn't come at the hands of a team that is currently ranked in the top 6. If K-State had won in Ames they would currently be tied for first in the Big 12 standings. It is important that the Wildcats don't let the Cyclones make it four straight victories.

4 *The Cyclones' average margin of victory in those three consecutive wins.*

It always seems to come down to the wire with these two teams, but as of late it is Iowa State who has had more left in the tank in the end. When the Cyclones visited Bramlage last season it was guard Scott Christopherson who scored all five of his shots from behind the arc and led all scorers with 29 points. Christopherson is no longer a factor, but the 3-ball is still a concern when dealing with the Cyclones.

19.4 *The number of points Iowa State's senior guard Will Clyburn has averaged in the last five games.*

Clyburn is playing as well as anyone in the country. He had his way with the Wildcats in their first meeting this season, scoring 24 points while shooting 50 percent from the floor. He also ripped down 10 boards and added two steals. Iowa State's offensive production could dramatically decrease if the Wildcats can take Clyburn out of the game.

20 *The number of consecutive games Iowa State has won at home.*

Why does this number matter? Because they are 1-3 on the road this season in Big 12 play. K-State head coach Bruce Weber has preached to his players the importance of taking care of business at home, so Bramlage will not be an easy road game for the Cyclones.

55 *The jersey number of K-State junior guard Will Spradling.*

Since his 0-5 shooting game against Kansas, Spradling has stepped up his performance. As the Wildcats' biggest offensive threat in Ames, Spradling finished with 15 points, which included 4-for-5 from long range. Despite breaking his nose against Texas last week, Spradling has been showing signs of improvement in every game.

2010 *The last year the Wildcats made it to the Elite Eight in the NCAA Tournament.*

That year the Wildcats beat Iowa State to win their 19th game of the season, pushing their record to 19-4. K-State has the same opportunity to do that this weekend. With a win on Saturday, it would be the quickest that K-State has gotten to 19 wins since that 2009-10 season.

Balanced offense gives Wildcats advantage

Mark Kern

At the beginning of the season there were rumblings among the K-State faithful that senior forward Rodney McGruder would have to average at least 20 points a night for the Wildcats to be able to compete.

McGruder has been outstanding this season, averaging 14.6 points and 5.4 rebounds per game, while guarding the opposition's best wing scorer on most nights. However, the play of his teammates has made things easier for McGruder, and made this team much more difficult to slow down. A lot of this success is because of the play of sophomore point guard Angel Rodriguez.

The saying goes that the point guard is the "quarterback" of the offense. If that is the case, the run that Rodriguez is on is very similar to what Joe Flacco just did for the Baltimore Ravens' Super Bowl run.

Besides averaging 9.4 points a game, Rodriguez has been in complete control of the offense, with an assist/turnover ratio of 2:4, ranking second in the Big 12 behind teammate Will Spradling.

This is a major improvement from last season, as his ratio last season was only 1:18. This improvement and his ability to stay under control has helped take the Wildcats to that next level offensively. While he has done a great job of distributing the ball to teammates, someone still has to score. One of those guys is junior forward Shane Southwell.

On the season, Southwell is averaging 8 points per game, more than doubling his career average as a Wildcat.

Southwell has given the Wildcats a legitimate threat from deep, shooting 41.7 percent from the 3-point line. With the Wildcats going with a smaller lineup, putting Southwell at the four sometimes allows them to create the mismatches that Will Clyburn creates at Iowa State.

In the 59-55 loss to KU on Jan. 22, Southwell was the MVP. He led the team with 19 points and seven rebounds, hitting five 3-pointers and giving the Wildcats the chance to win the game in the final minutes.

When Southwell is able to shoot well it helps to take the focus off of McGruder, enabling him to attack the middle of the lane.

Make no mistake about it, this is still McGruder's team. When the Wildcats needed someone to score in the second half of the Oklahoma State game, McGruder delivered 26 of his game-high 28 points in a 73-67 victory over the Cowboys on Jan. 5.

Every team has that go-to player, like McGruder, that they count on to lead them in scoring. However, very few teams have the balance of scoring the Wildcats have, and that is what makes them a legitimate contender come March.

Mark Kern is a senior in print journalism. Please send comments to *sports@kstatecollegian.com*.

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